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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Friday, May 1, 1942

SUBJECT: "MARKS OF A WELL-FITTED DRESS". Information from home economists of the Department of Agriculture.

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Nowadays most every woman is giving serious thought to her clothes. She is taking care of the clothes she already has. And she is buying clothing with more care than ever before.

For she wants her wardrobe to last as long as possible to conserve material, labor, and power, But she still wants her clothing to look well. She wants them to sort of "grow old gracefully."

Today I have some tips from the home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture about the fit of a dress--that is, the way the dress "sets" to your figure.

As you know, the way a dress fits has a lot to do with how long it will last, and how well it will wear, /still look attractive. If your dress is fitted correctly, there will be no unnecessary wear or strain on it. That means it will last and keep its looks longer. As every woman knows, a dress that fits well bolsters moral and also conserves material.

But to get down to the suggestions about fitting. The home economists have listed some of the marks of a well-fitted dress. These are points to check when you buy a dress readymade, when you make a dress yourself, or when you remodel one of your old dresses.

First of all, here are some general points to look for.

Look closely at the "grain" of the goods. For this tells you how carefully a dress has been cut. And the way the dress is cut has a lot to do with how well it will fit. The crosswise yarns should run straight across---horizontally. The

lengthwise yarns should run also straight and true--up and down. That means the crosswise yarns and the lengthwise yarns cross each other at right angles. Check the grain at the bustline of the dress, at the hipline, and in the sleeve caps. If the dress is "off grain" at these points, it's likely not to fit well.

Next, take a look at the seams. Here you can get a clue as to how well the dress was put together, which also makes a difference in the way it fits. Every seam should lie flat and hang straight if the dress is to keep its proper shape. The seam at the under arm should drop straight down. And the side skirt seam should continue on from the underarm seam in line straight to the hem. Naturally, if you are making rather than buying the dress--you'll want to try to get the seams in correctly in the first place.

When you try on a dress--see that there are no unbecoming folds or wrinkles as you stand. There will have to be some folds or wrinkles when you move, but not more than those necessary for your comfort and easy action. Stand in the dress, sit in it, move around in it. If it pulls or draws, or is uncomfortable anywhere--it does not fit correctly.

After you check these general points, give more careful attention to 8 different parts of the dress.

Take a look at the shoulders. If you have a normal figure, the shoulder seam on your dress shouldn't be visible either from the front or the back when you try on the dress. But, if you are slightly round shouldered, it may be more becoming to have the shoulder line slightly back of the normal line. And if you are overly erect, it is often better to have the seam a little ahead of the normal line.

Check the way the neck looks. With or without a collar, a dress looks best if it fits snugly at the sides and the back of the neck. A neckline that bulges or stands out is uncomfortable.

Next, note the waist at the back and front. Always avoid a tight fit in the back and around the bust. Be sure that enough fullness is directly under the bust-line and enough in the back for the shoulder blades.

Look at the seam that joins the sleeve to the shoulder. This should form a straight line up and down in the back and the front. And it should curve as closely as possible over the shoulder and under the arm. Otherwise the seam at the armscye will bind or pull. And it may ruin the neckline and cause the blouse to fit uncomfortably.

The sleeve itself should look as though it is set into the armhole--and not the other way around. A long sleeve ought to come well down over your wrist bone. And it should not slip above the wrist bone when you raise your arm. To test your sleeves for comfort, touch your head with both hands to see that the sleeve does not pull or draw.

As for the waistline of a dress, this usually follows the natural waistline. That means it is slightly higher in the back than in the front. If the waistline is snug it helps to keep both the skirt and the blouse in proper position.

When you look at the skirt be sure that the dress does not swing out at the center of the front or the center of the back. The space between the hipline and the waistline usually looks best if it is fitted smoothly but not tightly. And there should be no draw or pull across the hipline.

There's not much to check about a hem, except to be sure it's even and a becoming length. But if you buy a pleated skirt, make sure the hem is turned up straight on the goods. Otherwise, the pleats may become uneven very soon.

These are the marks of a well-fitting dress. If your dress checks on every point, you are fortunate. If it doesn't, many times a very simple alteration here or there will make it fit well.

(Written by Elma Van Horn)

